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NEAR EAST/AFRICA DIVISION

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INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

For Week Ending
1 March 1950

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NEAR EAST/AFRICA INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

GREECE

Sunday's elections: The national election scheduled for 5 March--Greece's first since 1946--will probably fail to establish the leadership of any one party or group, with the result that a new election may be called for in a relatively few months. The majority of the voters will probably gravitate, as in the past, toward the two established major parties, the centrist Venizelos Liberals and the rightist Tsaldaris Populists. Under the proportional representation system being used, however, the welter of smaller parties also in the race will probably divide up a sufficient number of the 250 seats at stake to prevent any single party from forming a cabinet by itself. Inasmuch as the old Liberal-Populist coalition will be hard to revive, the result is likely to be the most intense political maneuvering seen in Greece since its liberation.

Unless the left-of-center Plastiras-Tsouderos group makes too serious an inroad, the Liberals may supplant the Populists as the largest single party, since Populist leader Tsaldaris is handicapped by recent defections from his party and by dissatisfaction with his leadership on the part of other politicians whose help he might need. Although Venizelos may be able to gain the cooperation of two or three minor groups close to his Liberal Party, and thus have a slightly better chance than anyone else to form a working coalition, no single party leader stands out as a logical choice for the premiership. Among the minor parties which the post-election cabinet will have to take into account, the most important besides that of Plastiras is the moderate rightist Papandreou group. In addition, a considerable segment of popular support will go to a half dozen lesser groups, ranging from that of the extreme rightist Maniatakis to Sofianopoulos' "Democratic Front" at the left edge of the legal pale. The maneuvering of any of these groups may have a critical influence on the balance of power. If such a situation succeeded in preventing any effective and reasonably stable government from emerging, the King would probably not wait long before calling for a new election in which he would urge Marshal Papagos to participate.

CYPRUS

Church moderates enosis stand: As a result of Communist pressure for greater militancy on the "union with Greece" (enosis) issue, the Cyprus Church as leader of the enosis movement now seems eager to

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reach a compromise with Great Britain. Archbishop Makarios has announced his willingness to accept any British promise to give the island its freedom after ten years; at the same time he has rejected the Communist proposals to send a united delegation to the UN and European capitals to spread enosis propaganda, and as a face-saving alternative he plans to send his own delegation to Western European capitals alone. Meanwhile there are indications that both Greece and the Cyprus Church would be agreeable to British retention of military bases and perhaps to British protection of Cyprus, if enosis should become a reality. While the Church is exposing itself to the change of being less militant than the Communists on the issue, it would gain considerable local prestige at Communist expense by now obtaining a definite commitment for the future, since immediate union is out of the question. The Turkish Government, opposed to any change in the status quo at this time, might well be less strongly opposed to a definite pledge which served to postpone the issue for the next critical decade. In that period Communist influence in Cyprus may be expected to decline as the colonial development program increases economic stability and raises the standard of living and as Cypriot political maturity is improved with greater literacy and more experience in interim self-government. (In the same period, meanwhile, the uncertainties of the Greek situation might be largely resolved.) While the British have recently reiterated their position that the issue is entirely closed, the more conciliatory attitude of the Church may persuade them that a fresh approach, in the nature of a new offer of limited local self-government, might be desirable.

ERITREA

The riots in Asmara: The recent flareup of Moslem-Christian violence in Asmara--evidently touched off by the murder of a minor Moslem official by pro-Ethiopian bandits and an attack on his funeral procession by Christian Copts--adds new fuel to an already tense situation. Hitherto the principal cause of unrest in Eritrea has been political, with the pro-Ethiopian Copts ranged against the pro-independence Moslems and Italians. Recent reports, however, indicate that the Moslems have defected from the independence bloc, apparently fearing Italian as much as Ethiopian domination, and this latest instance of Copt violence, directed against a group whose political objectives are now unclear, may in part represent an effort to influence the UN Commission of Inquiry now in Asmara. Meanwhile, the Italians have not been idle in

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supporting the Independence bloc, and, with Moslem-Copt feeling at fever pitch, the situation is likely to be turbulent for some time to come.

IRAN

Internal security dangers: Several leading Iranian figures have recently asserted that popular unrest generated by Iran's depressed economic situation and spurred on by the pro-Soviet Tudeh underground is reaching threatening proportions and may soon get out of hand. They include Chief of Staff Razmara, who contends that the situation has developed to a point where the army can no longer contain Tudeh resurgence, since the underlying cause is widespread economic distress, and that he would hesitate to count on the common soldier, who is drawn from the masses, should a popular surge of resentment against the government develop. Moreover, the Oriental Secretary of the British Embassy believes that the Tudeh Party is now in a position at least to attempt a coup d'etat and US Ambassador Wiley considers the situation dangerous.

These statements cannot be entirely discounted even though Razmara and other Iranian leaders may be exaggerating their fears in an attempt to gain direct US support. Serious distress and unrest are known to exist in certain sensitive areas. The Tudeh Party has increased its activities in spite of the fact that it has been outlawed and is operating under conditions of martial law--indicating inability of the army to cope with at least this phase of subversion. In the light of what tangible evidence is available, however, Razmara does seem to be overstating the immediacy of the subversive danger. The Tudeh Party, while it has shown undoubted signs of vitality in recent months, has still to demonstrate its readiness to move on from the printing press to the picket line or the barricade. In the absence of general resistance to the government's authority, it is difficult to believe that the armed forces, assisted as they could be by the tribes, would prove unable to retain control.

The current state of affairs, nonetheless, does represent a challenge to the Iranian Government. Economic pressure should be somewhat lessened by summer when the first effects of Seven-Year Economic Development Program operations should be felt and the new crops will be in. Unless extraordinary relief measures are taken

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before then, however, the government may be confronted not only with sporadic local protests but also with a growing resentment among the population and a falling away of large number of those who have hitherto supported the regime because of their belief in its promises of economic reform. Meanwhile, the Tudeh Party, which already appears to be getting financial as well as moral support from the USSR, will undoubtedly capitalize on this situation.

INDIA-PAKISTAN

The Bengal issue: The recent communal disturbances in Bengal are at the moment overshadowing even the Kashmir dispute in their effect upon India-Pakistan relations. Thus far the extent and immediate cause of the disturbances are not entirely clear, although it is known that lives have been taken and property destroyed first in East Bengal and then in West Bengal and that a limited exodus of the minority community has occurred in both provinces. Whatever the facts of the situation in Bengal itself may be, however, the subject of communal outbreaks there has aroused violent feelings in New Delhi which have now been echoed in Karachi. Quoting an Indian official in East Bengal to the effect that fear for their survival might lead to attempts at mass migration by the province's 12 million Hindus, high officials of the Indian Government have gone on to express both concern lest widespread communal violence result throughout India and their resentment over the Pakistan Prime Minister's refusal either to tour the provinces in person with Nehru or to permit joint commissions to do so. Pakistan at first dismissed India's Bengal proposals as unnecessary, recommending simply that both governments take steps to prevent further emigration. However, Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan has now reportedly joined the controversy with a statement asserting that India has been guilty of provocative lies on the Bengal issue and warning that "if India wants war she will find us fully prepared." It is possible, as suggested by British observers, that India may be deliberately overstating the gravity of the situation in order to embarrass Pakistan in the UN Security Council deliberations on Kashmir, and the restiveness among East Bengal's Hindus may have been heightened by agents of the Indian Council for the Protection of the Rights of Minorities. Nevertheless, feelings on the subject-- particularly on India part -- are sufficiently intense to make the issue a potentially explosive one.

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NOTED IN BRIEF

Although it constitutes a very great burden on a severely strained economy, the large (approximately \$163 million) 1950-51 Ministry of National Defense budget appropriation has been approved by the Turkish Grand National Assembly. The politically realistic Turks obviously still feel that their position in relation to the USSR is insecure, and that the continued assumption of heavy defense costs--despite substantial US aid--is as necessary in the coming year as it has been in the past.

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In spite of continuing tension between Turkey and Bulgaria, which recently led the Turkish Foreign Minister to suggest the possibility of closing Turkey's consular offices in Bulgaria, Turkey has so far made no move to follow US lead in breaking diplomatic relations. The Turks regretted that Bulgarian actions made such a move on the part of the US necessary, because it apparently furthered a Soviet plan to eliminate US observers from satellite countries. Since Turkey is the only nation closely associated with western democracies which has a common border with Bulgaria and still maintains diplomatic relations with that state the Turks may hesitate to break off those relations until after making a careful estimate of how much information might thereby be lost.

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The appointment of Husein Ala in Prime Minister Saed's new cabinet to the post of Foreign Minister, should result in a more realistic approach on the part of Iran in its relations with the US, especially in its efforts to obtain greater US aid. Having represented his government in Washington for many years, Ala is conversant with US policy and procedures. He is, moreover, a close advisor of the Shah.

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The election of Reza Hekmat to the presidency of the recently elected Majlis by a strong majority over pro-British deputy Taheri and the election of Hasan Taqizadeh to the presidency of the Senate augur poorly for favorable action on the AIOC agreement. The Shah is insisting that the agreement be presented without prior attempt to obtain further concessions from the British, apparently in order to give the matter a "parliamentary airing" and to place the responsibility for rejection of the agreement on the Majlis.

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